

The Guilty Victim

a short story by Catherine B. Krause

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Author's Note: *Reading "The Jewish Maiden," I found it puzzling that it was intended to come off as happy when it was the opposite to me. I decided to write a fictionalized account of something that had happened to me in a way that would be somewhat more likely to create the same incongruence in any reader. This story was written while I was processing the traumatic events that it describes in therapy (six years later). Please realize that this may evoke memories of sexual trauma and prepare or skip accordingly.*

In Northeast Ohio, in the house of her parents, lived a 20-something closeted transgender Jewish woman. The name she was given at birth will not be related, but the one she would eventually change it to was Sarah. She had been a kind child, slow to learn her lessons but skilled and capable when she did finally grasp them, but had a number of emotional problems and wasn't sure if they had always been there or were secondary to her untreated gender dysphoria. Because of her difficulty living in her body and dealing with these emotional and psychological problems, she heavily abused drugs and failed to quit them on multiple occasions. It was during one such occasion that she met her master.

He introduced himself as an Internet celebrity and said that he was looking for someone to sleep with on the side while he was away from his fiancée, who consented to it. She told him she had just quit doing drugs, but later confessed that she still had a problem with them. This did not phase him one bit; he was still entirely willing to sleep with her that night. They discussed their fantasies and their pasts. She told him she had a fantasy of being raped and that one day she might enjoy role-playing it. He sounded intrigued.

They continued to meet on a regular basis and he would treat her as she asked him to and stop when she wanted him to. Then one day he bought a hotel for the two of them to spend the night at. Excited, she went there to meet him. He brought out rope and said he'd like to tie her up, and she agreed to let him, as he had never betrayed her trust before. He began to beat her, and when she cried the safe word, he didn't stop. "You wanted this," he said. "You told me you had a rape fantasy."

"I didn't agree to do this tonight," she replied.

"It's rape. You don't get to agree to it. It just happens, and it's your fault, because you wanted this."

"It's not my fault."

"Of course it is. You asked for this."

She tried to protest a number of times after that and he would tell her to shut up, not to make any noise, or she would be beaten harder. He penetrated her and burned her with cigarettes all over her body. It was the worst night of her life, and by the end of it she had stopped protesting and allowed him to do

whatever he wanted to her. But she never believed it was her fault the whole night. She knew she hadn't asked for it.

Years passed. Homeless, a woman entered a meeting of a self-help group at a church. It was Sarah. She was only there to stop using drugs and alcohol, but they told her she was an evil person who needed to save herself by finding a higher power. Initially she was repulsed, but she wasn't sure how else she could get her life back on track. Though she had always been an agnostic, she was so broken inside that she decided to listen to anything they told her she had to do. She found a sober home and another member of the group who was willing to help her and listen as she related everything that was bothering her.

With this other member of the group, Sarah related the story of her rape. She said she wasn't sure if it was her fault. "It was," said the other member.

"It was?"

"Yes. You put yourself in that situation by letting him tie you up. It was your lifestyle that caused this to happen to you."

"But I didn't ask him to do that to me!"

"You got exactly what you wanted; you wanted him to rape you and he did."

"I'm not sure if I can keep listening to you."

"Do you want to stay sober or what?"

Sarah went home burning inside. She was angry. But she realized there was no way for her to stop using drugs without this group of people, so over the course of the night, she slowly came to accept it. It was her fault. She deserved it. She asked for it. And if she did everything right from then on, no harm would ever come to her again. She was in the hands of God now, and as long as she obeyed all the rules, she would never be raped again.